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RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4477
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000267

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SUBJECT: SITUATION REPORT: TSVANGIRAI DISCUSSES RUNOFF WITH
AMBASSADOR

REF: HARARE 254

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai requested a meeting with the Ambassador after the MDC briefing (Septel) on election results. Tsvangirai explained that yesterday the MDC had negotiated with emissaries of President Robert Mugabe and had reached a tentative deal. Mugabe had agreed to concede defeat. He wanted an additional six months in office which the MDC had rejected. He also wanted a government of national unity. Tsvangirai said the MDC was not opposed in principle to this; the MDC had always preached reconciliation. The MDC had requested a list of 10 names to consider for government positions. The parties agreed that Mugabe and Tsvangirai would meet in the morning before a concession speech by Mugabe and a later victory speech by Tsvangirai. ZANU-PF negotiators failed today to contact the

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MDC about the meeting. According to Tsvangirai, he later heard from an individual whom he described as a high-level ZANU-PF insider that Mugabe had rejected the agreement. ZANU-PF was returning to Plan A--a runoff.

¶2. (C) Tsvangirai also told the Ambassador he had received information that ZANU-PF would allege that a runoff election within 21 days, as required by the Electoral Act, was not logistically feasible. Mugabe, by presidential decree, would set the runoff election 90 days from the date of the election, March 29. Tsvangirai said he was concerned about ZANU-PF violence and intimidation during the electoral period, especially since the MDC, knowing it had strong support in the urban areas, would focus campaigning in the rural areas. Expressing strong concern about a 90-day electoral period, Tsvangirai asked that the diplomatic community support the 21-day period called for by the Electoral Act.

13. (C) A business contact with excellent ZANU-PF contacts confirmed to us today that the ruling party's plan was a runoff election. He said the ZEC would declare Tsvangirai the winner of the March 29 election with about 48 percent of the vote, and with Mugabe winning about 43 percent. According to our contact, Mugabe and his inner circle had yesterday agreed that Mugabe would step down, as outlined by Tsvangirai, but Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono and Defense

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Chief Constantine Chiwenga had convinced Mugabe to reverse course and contest a runoff election. A committee to oversee the runoff election had been set up. It would be chaired by Didymus Mutasa (Minister of State Security) and would also include Nicholas Goche (Minister of Labor), Elliot Manyika (ZANU-PF commissar), and Emmerson Mnangagwa. Our contact said the Central Intelligence Office (CIO) had informed him that ZANU-PF would attempt to limit observers for the runoff and limit the MDC's access to rural areas. He also believed that Gono was preparing to raise USD 200 million through the sale of diamonds in London.

14. (C) Harare remains calm. We expect that the announcement of a runoff will be greeted with acceptance, if not resignation, by most people. It will damper any short-term prospects for violence.

COMMENT

15. (C) Mugabe and his inner circle have discussed several scenarios during the last several days (Reftel) and as recently as yesterday were discussing a deal whereby Mugabe would step down. It appears probable they have settled on a runoff. We note that a sub-headline in today's The Herald,

HARARE 00000267 002 OF 002

the government mouthpiece, stated "Presidential Poll Rerun Expected."

16. (C) The question arises as to why ZANU-PF would not steal the election outright, since it has obviously resorted to fraud during the election process. Under the Electoral Act as amended in January as a result of the SADC negotiations, each polling station was required to post a form outside the station with results of counting. The ZEC is required to maintain custody of the originals, and it is logical to believe that Mugabe's total vote, as revealed by the forms, would be less than 50 percent and would approximate the 43 percent it appears the ZEC will ultimately declare he has won.

17. (C) ZANU-PF appears to have suffered a stunning defeat. We believe it will pull out all the stops to ensure that this does not happen again in a runoff election. END COMMENT.

MCGEE